

Recording your BDGP data online

Only 10% of farmers who participated in the 2014 Beef Data Programme (BDP) recorded their animal survey data online (for traits such as cow milk score, calf quality and calf docility). The story was different for calf registration data, where over 50% of the same scheme participants recorded their data online, through either AgFood.ie or approved farm management software.

This is a significant difference and prompts the question as to why farmers prefer to record their animal survey data on paper, compared with online? It is also important in the context of the new Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP), where our goal is to introduce significant cost-efficiencies for farmers as the scheme is rolled out over the next six years.

Clearly farmers feel comfortable with the current animal survey forms, as they are simple to follow and easy to complete. However, there are a number of additional benefits to recording your animal survey data online. These include:

- An electronic listing of all relevant animals (ie, calves, cows and stock bulls), together with the data to be recorded on each animal as part of the BDGP.
- An easy-to-interpret assessment of your herd-level recording for each of the BDGP traits (see picture insert).
- Based on this herd-level assessment, an understanding of where you stand regarding compliance with this key aspect of the scheme.

It is this last point that is critical for farmers, as one of the

COST OF GENOTYPING CONFIRMED AT €22/SAMPLE

ICBF have confirmed the cost of genotyping for the first phase of the BDGP (2015-2017) at €22/sample. This is an €8 reduction in cost, compared to last year's Beef Genomic Scheme (BGS), a drop of some 27%. The reduction is significant and highlights ICBF and DAFM's commitment to ensuring greater cost-efficiencies for farmers in the operation of the scheme.

major benefits farmers see in the online approach is the certainty that they have completed all relevant tasks in relation to data recording and, on that basis, their payment for these actions is intact.

So how do farmers opt to record their animal survey data online?

Basically, there are a number of options, including Agfood.ie, approved farm management systems and the ICBF website (www.icbf.com), with the latter also being accessible on mobile devices. To log on to ICBF, insert your username (your IE herd number) and your password. If you cannot find your password, simply text PASS to 089 4577663, or contact ICBF HerdPlus on query@icbf.com or phone 1850-625-626.

We would be delighted to help you make the switch to online recording.



Sample page for recording BDGP survey data online at www.icbf.com



Niall Kilrane, ICBF, speaking at the Irish Farmers Journal/ICBF/Bord Bia livestock demonstration at this year's National Ploughing Championships. The benefits of breeding high Replacement Index stock is one the key messages, with some 5-star cows and replacement heifers on display.

Q&A

Q. I have received my genomics tags, but broke one while tagging an animal? For any broken tags you will need to order a replacement hair card. You can do this by calling 1850 625 626. Simply give the tag number of the animal and a hair card will be issued by post. The procedure is the same for any tags received for dead, sold or dangerous animals. In the latter cases a hair card will be issued for a different animal.

Q. From what part of the animal should I get the hair? Hair should be pulled from the tail of the animal. The best way to do this is to put the animal into the cattle crush (always ensure animals are properly restrained) and pull the hair from the tail with a pliers. Ensure you pull the hair from the roots as the DNA is extracted from the root follicles. Do not cut the hair.

FARMER FOCUS: MICHAEL MITCHELL

'Recording all my data online'

Name: Michael Mitchell, Castlebar, Co Mayo.
Farming System: Suckler to weanling.
BDGP cow reference No: 23
4 and 5 Star Females: 13 cows; 10 heifers.
Stock Bull or AI: 100% AI
Replacement Strategy: Breed everything myself.

Why did you join the BDGP? I've always had an interest in cattle breeding. I think the scheme can help me to improve my stock. I do feel that elite stock coming from the suckler herd should be rewarded more by the market at slaughter.

Do you feel it will deliver for the national suckler herd? I think it will. Some questions were raised about the scheme initially, but I think these have been allayed. Breeding is a long-term project and I think the results will take a while to become evident, but I'd be confident it will pay dividends in time.

What replacement strategy do you plan to implement in light of the scheme? I'm 100% AI so I have a lot of options. My plan is to match my best cows to the best Replacement Index bulls available on the market. I also calved down a few beef crosses from the dairy herd this year as a trial.

Do you know much about genomics? I wouldn't be too familiar with the science of genomics, but I am aware of the success that the dairy sector has experienced with it. If this is anything to go by, then it really is a no-brainer for the beef to follow.



An export-quality Charolais heifer weanling bred by Michael on display at the Dovea Genetics stand at this week's National Ploughing Championships. Her dam, an AAX, is a 5-star cow with a Replacement Index of €113. The heifer is sired by Lisnagre Handsome (HZJ) and achieved an ADG of 1.34kg from birth to weaning.

How do you record your data? I record all data online and have done since the old suckler scheme. I do it through the Department website, www.agfood.ie. It's quick and easy and I know once I click the save button that my information is recorded.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

September: Genotyping tags, paper survey forms and any remaining BDGP Euro-Star reports arriving on farms.

22-24 September: National Ploughing Championships, Ratheniska. Livestock demonstrations at the *Irish Farmers Journal* stand. Your BDGP questions answered at the DAFM stand.